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 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
 INFORMATION FROM
 FOREIGN DOCUMENTS OR RADIO BROADCASTS

REPORT

CD NO.

STAT

COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF
INFORMATION 1952

SUBJECT Scientific - Geophysics, Academy of Sciences

HOW
PUBLISHED Daily newspaper

DATE DIST. 15 May 1952

WHERE
PUBLISHED Moscow

NO. OF PAGES 3

DATE
PUBLISHED 25 Feb 1952

LANGUAGE Russian

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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CRITICIZES OPERATIONS OF
GEOPHYSICAL INSTITUTE, ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USSR

V. Reutov

The value of geophysical science to the national economy of our country increases with each year. The tremendous capital construction that is unfolding, the realization of the great plan to transform nature, the prospecting for minerals -- these are all connected in great part with the development of geophysics. Hence, it is understandable that the USSR is paying tremendous attention to problems of development of geophysical science.

The Geophysical Institute of the Academy of Sciences USSR, which is the central institution in this field of science, has been growing considerably with each succeeding year. In its operations there has been definite progress. It is sufficient to call attention to the cosmogonic theory of Academician O. Yu. Schmidt, to the development of seismic methods in prospecting, to the new method of seismic regionalization which was developed by Senior Scientific Associate I. Ye. Gubin. These are important advances which have furthered Soviet geophysical science.

However, all these advances are only a small part of what the institute can give and of what the socialist national economy can rightfully demand from it.

Important problems are imposed on the Geophysical Institute in connection with the implementation of the great construction projects of Communism. It must, for example, study the seismic and seismogeological conditions of the regions through which the Main Turkmen Canal will run.

It would seem that for their solution the directors of the institute would be obliged to pick out the best possible scientific forces, the best equipment. Actually, they have not carried out these works as they should.

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In the beginning of 1951, the institute organized the Aralo-Caspian geophysical expedition for investigating the regions through which the Main Turkmen Canal will pass. Even from its very first days, the expedition appeared to be a stepchild among other expeditions.

First of all, the expedition had a "shortage" of highly-qualified scientific workers and of experienced laboratory workers. They were all busy either in other expeditions or in the institute itself carrying out less significant scientific investigations. To the demand made by Senior Scientific Associate S. V. Puchkov, head of the expedition, for qualified workers to be placed at his disposal, the director of the institute, G. A. Gamburtsev, Corresponding Member, Academy of Sciences USSR, and his substitute V. V. Belousov, Doctor of Geology and Mineralogical Sciences, responded with a resolute rejection. Thus, an understaffed hurriedly outfitted expedition went to the regions through which the Main Turkmen Canal will run.

Meanwhile, the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences USSR had charged the directors of the institute to investigate, during geophysical work in the regions of the Main Turkmen Canal, the method of seismic regionalization proposed by I. Ye. Gubin. This method permits one to determine the places where powerful earthquakes originate and the areas of their propagation, to reveal relatively safe areas, and to determine the respective frequencies of possible earthquakes. It is easy to imagine how important all this is for the builders of the Main Turkmen Canal. But because the expedition had workers who were unskilled or who did not want to use this method, even now it has not been employed.

Without affording effective assistance to the great construction projects of Communism, the institute is also solving badly many other important problems of great scientific and practical value.

One of the most important problems before the institute is that of forecasting earthquakes not only in regard to location but also in regard to strength and time. However, the institute is also solving this problem badly.

The institute has not endeavored to make any progress in improving methods of weather forecasting, especially long-range.

Thus, large-scale problems of geophysics which possess first-rate significance for the national economy are being worked on by the institute in a feeble manner. It follows, therefore, that works connected with the solution of scientific problems of practical significance are not receiving any support from the institute's directors.

The institute's directors were unable to organize collective action in institute operations on a coordinated solution of the most important scientific problems. In essence, the organized body of the institute does not at all represent with solidarity and singleness of purpose the united individual groups of scientists who are busy with investigations. The institute is not united by a single, general purpose. The closed nature of these groups in the sphere of their own narrow specialized interests reduces to this: many serious pressing problems of science are being solved slowly and poorly or are not receiving any solution at all.

Under such circumstances, scientific criticism and self-criticism do not develop perfectly. Every attempt at scientific criticism is resisted by the directors of the institute, and anyone criticizing quickly falls into disfavor. It was for this reason that Professor V. I. Baranov and certain other associates were compelled to leave the institute.

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Such an unfavorable attitude toward criticism is especially beneficial to the soil of clannishness, cliques, and nepotism, and to favoritism and the self-interest of protected groups. Such conditions lead to mutual, general excuses and pardons within the institute and to lack of punishment for disruption or poor execution of scientific investigations.

All this has been possible only because of the exceptionally weak operation of the institute's bureau of party organization and of its secretary, I. P. Smirnov. The party bureau rarely considers the vitally important problems of the institute's operations and does not mobilize party members into a struggle against deficiencies and failings. The bureau does not educate scientific cadres of the institute in the spirit of high ideals and principles, of scientific activity, and of courageous criticism and self-criticism.

Geophysics is a science in whose development the entire national economy is interested. Conditions in the Geophysical Institute of the Academy of Sciences USSR must be improved and its activity directed to the solution of large-scale problems which possess important scientific and practical significance.

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